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TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [CU](#) [EZ](#)

SUBJECT: CZECHS PLAN TO CHANGE STYLE, BUT NOT SUBSTANCE, OF  
THEIR CUBA POLICY

Classified By: Political-Economic Counselor Mike Dodman  
for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[11](#). (C) Summary. The Czech government plans to take no special action in response to the inevitable announcement of Castro's death. The Czechs will simply continue supporting the peaceful democratic opposition in Cuba, and searching for ways to persuade the EU to do more. However, the Czechs fear their "Enfant Terrible" reputation within the EU has been counterproductive. Therefore, the Czech government plans to change the style, but not the substance, of its policy initiatives in future EU negotiations on Cuba. End summary.

[12](#). (U) Poloff met with MFA Director of the Americas Department Jakub Skalnik and Deputy Petr Janousek on January 22 to discuss what the Czech government plans to do when Castro dies.

[13](#). (SBU) Skalnik said the Czech MFA has not yet prepared a statement to be released upon news of Castro's death. However, he said now that newly appointed FM Karel Schwarzenberg (an ardent supporter of the democratic opposition in Cuba) is in place, his department will begin working on one.

[14](#). (C/NF) Skalnik added that the EU has prepared a statement (Janousek believes the Finnish presidency drafted it), but has declined to share the text with EU member states. Both the Finnish and German presidencies have explained that they fear someone (i.e., Spain) will leak the statement to the Cubans.

[15](#). (C/NF) Beyond the issuance of a statement, no specific action is planned in response to Castro's death, and Czech policy on Cuba will not change. However, the MFA believes a "cosmetic" change to the Czech approach on Cuba is necessary. The Czechs believe their "enfant terrible" image has hurt their efforts to promote meaningful change of EU common policy. Therefore, the Czechs plan to tone down their style and focus on consensus building. When asked how this plan might be achieved practically, Skalnik explained that the Czechs will let other outspoken critics of the Castro regime (he specified the Dutch, the Danes, the British, the Poles, and finally the Hungarians) speak first when the subject of Cuba comes up. The Czechs will then lend their support and contribute additional thoughts if necessary. Skalnik emphasized that the change is in style, not substance.

[16](#). (C/NF) Comment. We believe the "cosmetic" change described by Skalnik is just that: a genuine attempt to enhance the effectiveness of Czech efforts to help the Cuban people. We also note with interest that apparently both the Finnish and German presidencies believe that Spain's interest in Cuba is

so strong that Spain cannot be trusted to preserve the  
confidentiality of the EU statement prepared for Castro's

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death. End comment.

GRABER